

Child-Driven and Data-Driven; Can you be both?

georgecouros.ca/blog/archives/7724

By George

The short answer to the title of the post is “no”, you can’t be both “Child-Driven” and “Data-Driven”.

Here is the long answer.

When you have two focuses on what you are *driven* by, there will be times where one situation comes into conflict with the other. For example, when we “teach to the test” and not “to the child”, they might get the number we want, but if the learning doesn’t stick, did it hurt, harm, or do nothing for the child, and everything for the “number” we were looking for in the first place because of the data that we were “driven” by?

Dean Shareski tweeted this:

No, it's not okay to have a kid miss P.E. to finish their math work.

— Dean Shareski (@shareski) [September 15, 2017](#)

I used to do that, and I am ashamed to admit it. Not only did I not honour the strengths and passion of the students, I often made them hate coming to school. Here is something that is true; a kid won’t learn anything at school if they don’t show up in the first place.

Yes, sometimes we have to do things we hate, and that is okay. But when we do things to validate the adults that hurt kids, our focus is on the wrong place.

Let me make this clear...Data is not a horrible thing. Being “data-driven” is my concern.

I prefer the term “child-driven, evidence-informed”. The term “evidence” is much more encompassing, not necessarily by definition, but in how we use the words in education. Evidence is that amazing concert, the interaction we see in the hallways, the conversations we have with one another, that can’t be boiled down to a letter or number. Using that to *inform* what we do to serve the child is crucial to the growth of the individual, the educator, and the system as a whole.

[Bill Ferriter](#), in his post, “[Meaningful Ain’t Always Measurable](#)“, states the following:

I’m trying to call out a system that simultaneously encourages us to pursue lofty goals like teaching students to critically think or to build consensus or to be creative while asking us to fit every goal that we pursue into some kind of measurable format.

The truth is that the things that are the MOST meaningful are also the hardest to measure.

If you want kids to wrestle with meaningful objectives, you are going to have to back off your demands that everything be measurable in some way, shape or form. If measurement is what you want, simple outcomes is what you need to settle for.

If one day, before you became a teacher, you thought to yourself, "Do you know what I would like to do one day? Test kids.", There might be something wrong. But the system of education in North America has seemingly gone this way where the test (and the number) *is* the thing, not the students we serve. If people don't call it out, it is not going to change.

Again, I will say it.

